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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 001680

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KJUS](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [PHUM](#) [CO](#) [AUC](#) [GOV](#)  
SUBJECT: GOC TAKING ACTION AGAINST PARAMILITARY CEASE-FIRE VIOLATIONS

REF: BOGOTA 1198

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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1. (C) Since agreeing to a unilateral cease-fire in late November 2002, Colombia's major paramilitary groups -- the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), Central Bolivar Bloc (BCB) and Eastern Alliance have committed at least 370 murders, kidnappings, and other human rights violations nationwide. They are also suspected of up to 1,500 other violations. The AUC has committed approximately 120 confirmed cease-fire violations, including nine massacres, and the BCB approximately 60, including nine additional massacres. AUC political chief Carlos Castano publicly admitted that the AUC has violated the cease-fire, and said the only way to fully observe it in the context of ongoing conflict would be to concentrate all AUC forces in specific zones protected by the security forces.

2. (C) The GOC recognizes that the cease-fire has been violated with frequency, and has therefore continued offensive operations against paramilitary groups. Nearly 4,000 paramilitaries have been captured and 450 killed since President Uribe took office in August 2002. The OAS, which has agreed to verify and monitor paramilitary demobilization and reintegration, has said it will verify the cease-fire, but only after paramilitary combatants enter specific concentration zones. End Summary.

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Imperfectly Observed Cease-Fire  
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3. (C) As President Uribe acknowledged in his February 4 meeting with DAS Peter DeShazo (reftel), the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and other paramilitary groups have not adhered perfectly to the cease-fire they declared in late 2002 as a precondition for demobilization negotiations with the GOC. Vice-President Francisco Santos publicly criticized these cease-fire violations on February 12 and emphasized that the GOC will not tolerate paramilitary violence. According to the Presidential Program for Human Rights, the GOC has confirmed approximately 370 paramilitary cease-fire violations -- primarily murders and kidnappings -- that occurred between November 29, 2002 and February 9, 2004. The AUC was responsible for approximately 120 violations, including nine massacres (defined by the GOC as four or more persons killed at one time). The BCB, which also agreed to a cease-fire and eventual demobilization, was responsible for approximately 60 violations, including nine other massacres. The Eastern Alliance, an amalgam of various paramilitary groups operating on Colombia's eastern plains, was responsible for approximately 25 confirmed cease-fire violations. Smaller paramilitary groups that did not sign on to a cease-fire were responsible for at least 12 confirmed human rights crimes during this period, including five massacres. However, the GOC suspects that paramilitaries may also be to blame for as many as 1,500 other human rights crimes since November 2002. Of these, the AUC itself is suspected of 650 crimes. Although some of these violations involved clashes between rival paramilitary groups, most were directed at the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), National Liberation Army (ELN), or non-combatants.

4. (U) On February 16, AUC political chief Carlos Castano publicly admitted that the AUC has repeatedly violated the terms of the cease-fire. He said a full cease-fire is

impossible as long as the FARC continues offensive military actions, but emphasized that the AUC remains committed to demobilization. Castano said the AUC will be in a position to abide fully by the cease-fire once its troops gather in concentration zones secured by the armed forces.

15. (C) Despite paramilitary cease-fire violations, the overall level of paramilitary violence has fallen significantly since the cease-fires were implemented. According to the GOC, only 13 persons died in paramilitary massacres during 2003, compared with 54 in 2002 and 281 in 2001. In 2003, nationwide murders fell by 20 percent, massacres by 40 percent, kidnappings by 30 percent, and forced displacements by nearly 50 percent. Although the security forces' expanding presence throughout national territory has been the major factor in reductions in violence, we also attribute the drop in paramilitary violations to the cease-fire agreement and the general halt of paramilitary efforts to establish new areas of control.

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GOC Tough on Paramilitaries  
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16. (C) Aware that the cease-fire has been repeatedly violated, the GOC has continued military and law enforcement operations against paramilitaries, including groups involved in negotiations. Since Uribe took office in August 2002, the security forces have captured nearly 4,000 paramilitaries and killed almost 450 in combat. These are increases of 164 and 131 percent, respectively, compared to the last 18 months of the Pastrana administration. By comparison, captures and deaths in combat of guerrillas have increased 167 and 43 percent, respectively.

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Comment  
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17. (C) Although the GOC continues to take aggressive actions against paramilitaries, it needs a concentration of paramilitaries in specific, controllable zones, to enforce the unilateral cease-fire. The OAS has agreed to verify the cease-fire once combatants are concentrated. The GOC is in the process of preparing, institutionally and financially, to implement such a large-scale concentration. The Ambassador has denounced in the press paramilitary failures to adhere to their cease-fire commitment. We will continue to encourage the GOC to maintain military actions against all illegal armed groups.  
WOOD

=====CABLE ENDS=====